Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time All Saints Parish, Syr. NY

Nov. 12 & 13, 2016 S. Kathy Osbelt

As we just heard, Jesus shocked the admirers of the temple. They were in awe of the architect, the size (each stone weighed between 2 tons and 20 tons), the jewels, the gold; it was an incredibly huge, magnificent structure. The disciples’ experience would be similar to ours if we were beholding for the first time St. Peter’s in Rome. Jesus then throws a pall over their visual delight when he tells them that: “All you see here… the day will come when not one stone will be left on another but it will all be torn down.” Indeed, not long after that, in 70 AD, the Roman warrior Titus invaded Jerusalem and left only a part of the Western Wall which today is called the Wailing Wall.

But Jesus apocalyptic prophecy continued as he said there will be wars, nation against nation, powerful earthquakes, famines and plagues. “Before this happens, you, my disciples will be handed over and persecuted. You will be led to give testimony.

I myself will give you wisdom in speaking. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

We need perseverance right now:

* + Perseverance in prayer to come to really know Jesus.
  + Perseverance in imitating Jesus’ actions so we may come to love others as Jesus does
  + Perseverance in love that we may become who were created to be.

There is a story I often tell because it is so poignant and I think fitting for today’s call for perseverance.

There was a wise man sitting at the bank of a river. He noticed a scorpion had fallen into the water and was trying desperately to climb out. The wise man reached in and picked him up to place him on dry ground. In the process the scorpion stung him. Now a bit later the scorpion fell in the water again, again the wise man picked him up and again the scorpion bit him. A disciple who was watching asked the wise man: “Why do you keep saving the scorpion if you know it is going to sting you?” The wise man answered: “It is the scorpion’s nature to sting. It is our nature to love and to give life. Each must be true to their nature.”

That is our true nature. We have been made to love. That’s why we need one another. That is why if I told you I needed help I can bet my life on the fact that you would come forward and ask how you can help. It is in our true nature to follow Jesus’ command to love one another. It is what Christians before us made sacrifices to do. The truth is not changed nor compromised by any circumstance, religious or civil. Regardless of any political environment, we are called to address the needs of our brothers and sisters. In fact, we must be ready to work harder to be a voice for the voiceless; to protect the undocumented; to guard the life of our planet; to make global peace.

Perhaps this is a time when we shall face the test of our seriousness and our resolve. Despair is never an answer. We must struggle honorably and with great perseverance to advance the values of God’s reign, God’s way, to which we have committed ourselves.

God will be faithful to God’s people. God’s reign will not be stopped as long as we are true to our part of the covenant. We have clear directives in the Catholic Social teaching: dignity to every human person; a call to family and community participation; guard the rights and responsibilities of each member of the human family; continue a preferential option for and with people who are poor; the dignity of work and care for God’s creation.

In the recent words of Don Misleh, the Executive Director of Catholic Climate Covenant:

“The Pope’s message and his example offer a glaring contrast to this past election session which was one of the most contentious and uncivil in our nation’s history. There is a great desire by many – but sadly not all – to heal and to work together for the common good.

People of faith can and must begin to rise above partisan divisions for the sake of the common good, the climate and the healing of our nation. Let the Catholic Community be the one institution, following the example of Pope Francis, to be a place of safety to discuss common concerns and a place where all are welcome.”

Each one of us knows the world as it is right now can’t be the right one. Functioning for only part of its population? When you think of the global reality it is obviously unfinished. The world out there is not the one God intended. We see the growing gap between rich and poor, the lack of education and health care, a growing prison population and a rejection of whole peoples.

Hundreds of thousands are in fear today, wondering what their future will bring.

We have before us the opportunity to stand for who we say we are: the followers of Jesus, healers, peacemakers, people of mercy and justice.

We are a community whose colors are black, yellow, white, and brown who were born here or elsewhere in our common home. We are gay and straight, we are young and old, able and other abled, students and teachers. We are at various economic stations. Among us are Democrats and Republicans, or Green Party Members.

Together we have managed to expand our community through engagement with our Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters. Together we have made the reign of God felt in Villa Nueva giving a chance for life to mothers and their babies. We have taken young gay men off the dangerous streets in Kenya and have educated young women from The Gambia. We have clothed and fed those of our inner city, visited the homebound and welcomed all to our church. We have studied Catholic Social teaching and have acted against injustice. Let us not be distracted from the path we have taken toward peace, reconciliation, and fostering life for all people and creation. Let us not, in this critical moment, forget our true nature, our God given nature out of which we must continue to act for the sake of all. For this we pray!